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ART. VIII. — THEODORE MOMMSEN.

THIRTEEN years ago* the attention of the readers of this review was directed to the name of Theodore Mommsen, and his *Römische Geschichte* was briefly characterized. He was at that time hardly known outside of Germany; and it is probable that this was the first mention made of his name to the American public. He has since come to be recognized all over the world as one of the first of living historians, and by far the first authority upon Roman history and antiquities. His history has been translated into English, and has become a standard authority in England; and I now take the occasion of its republication in this country to attempt a more complete analysis of his qualities as an historian than was then possible, when his work had only recently appeared.

Probably the first characteristic which strikes the majority of Mommsen's readers is the completeness of his preparation for writing history, — the extent and the minuteness of his acquirements, apart from his purely intellectual qualities as a thinker, or the use he makes of his materials as an historical writer. His plan is a vast one, embracing the entire life of the nation, private as well as public; and in every department one is amazed, both at the thoroughness of his knowledge and at the insight which makes the merest trifle serve to illustrate his theme. This is not simply great learning, — that is to be expected as a matter of course in a thoroughly trained German philologist, — but an intimate acquaintance with classical literature, which is the entire stock in trade of most writers upon ancient history, is to this man only his solid foundation, while in every related branch of inquiry he is equally at home. Nor is this merely a show of learning, which, in an elaborate work, might dazzle laymen in each speciality, but which masters would recognize as obtained at second-hand; it is more even than that legitimate use of materials provided by others, which every writer must make to some extent, since *non omnia possumus omnes*; but in each branch of knowledge bearing on

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his subject he has himself done work and conducted investigations which entitle him to the rank of a master. When, therefore, he adopts the results of other inquiries, it is as one competent to criticise and judge their methods and results.

In the common branches of philology, — the criticism and interpretation of ancient authors, — he has not been very active, reserving his strength for more difficult, or at least more special work. Still, even here he has not been idle. Many brief essays attest his industry in this field ; for instance, a recent number of “*Hermes*” (Vol. IV. No. 3) contains an elaborate article by him upon the authorities followed by Tacitus, — an encouraging sign, among many others, that he is engaged in the preparations for the continuation of his history. In especial his chapters upon Roman literature are in themselves philological treatises of the first rank, combining the exhaustive treatment of the philologist with the philosophical and literary criticism of the historian and thinker.

His chief labors, however, have been bestowed upon those collateral branches of philology which most classical students either leave entirely aside or touch only incidentally. In linguistics proper he has made a careful study of the Italian dialects cognate to Latin, that is, just that branch of comparative philology which bears directly upon Roman history. These historical bearings are most important ; for his treatises upon “*The Lower Italian Dialects*,” taken together with the investigations of other able scholars in this field, have completely established the truth of the theory first proposed by A. W. von Schlegel, that the Umbrian and Sabellian dialects form one family with the Latin, in other words, that all the Italian nationalities, with the exception of the Etruscans and Japygians and some of those in the North, formed one race, the *Italian*, a sister, not a daughter, of the Greek. If this view is correct, — and it is hardly possible to question it, — Niebuhr’s Pelasgian theory, to which so many English writers still cling persistently, falls of itself ; and our historian is warranted in laying down as his aim, “to relate the history of Italy, not simply the history of the city of Rome.” The nearness of kin of the Celts and the Italians, maintained by so many distinguished scholars, he neither asserts nor denies, thinking the evidence not yet sufficient to pass judgment upon.

In the important and difficult science of "Epigraphik," — the deciphering and interpretation of inscriptions, — Mommsen must be acknowledged to be second to none. It is in this field, indeed, that he has been mainly occupied of late years, as his immense *Corpus Inscriptionum Regni Neapolitani* and other important works testify. Difficult as this science is, and comparatively unknown ground as it therefore presents to most scholars, it is here that the great historian finds much of his most valuable material. For here are contemporary records, — records that have come straight to us from the hands of the ancients themselves, uncorrupted by the blunderings of copyists, the interpolations of partisans, or the emendations of philologists. They are the records not merely of magistrates and wars and statutes, but of the every-day life of the common people, — tombstones, boundary-stones, votive offerings, imprecations, calendars; and in all these, amid much rubbish, there is many a precious bit of knowledge which our author knows how to detect and use. Every new edition calls in the evidence of newly discovered inscriptions, either in supporting or modifying his former views; and nothing illustrates better his sagacity and watchful industry than the changes in the foot-notes to the earlier chapters in the successive editions of the history.

Closely allied to the study of inscriptions is that of remains of art; no discovery in this field, from a statue to a bit of stone-wall, escapes his notice, or fails to teach him just what it is competent to teach. Coins, in especial, have been the object of his attention and the subject of one of his most elaborate treatises, — *Das Römische Münzwesen*. But, as in the branches already mentioned, it is not as a numismatist, but as an historian, that he has made this investigation; his sole object is to learn what coins will teach him in regard to the culture and institutions of the Romans. For coins are full of historical matter, when studied aright. For example, in the fact that the so-called Latin colonies enjoyed the right of coining money of their own, while there exist no coins, either of Roman colonies or of *municipia* with full citizenship, he finds proof that the Roman colonists still remained Roman citizens, while the Latin colonist exchanged his Roman citizenship for a partial independence; and that at all times,

so far as the Roman state extended, there was only one system of money. Again, in the style of the oldest Roman coins, as well as from the comparison of the several alphabets* and systems of weight used in Italy, he is aided in arriving at the important conclusion, one of his fundamental doctrines, that it was from the Greeks, not from the Etruscans, that the Romans derived lessons in civilization.

All these branches of inquiry may fairly be grouped under the head of philology; and philology is the essential foundation for a student of antiquity. Mommsen, however, although possessing the essential foundation, is not, after all, primarily a philologist, but a jurist. If I am not mistaken, he took his degree at the University of Kiel, in the Faculty of Law; and he was, at any rate, Professor of Roman Law for some years at the University of Breslau. It has been announced that he is to prepare the volume on Roman Jurisprudence for Becker and Marquardt's work on Roman Antiquities; and the latest publication of his that I have seen advertised is an edition of the Code of Justinian. The importance of this legal training in its influence upon the mind of the historian can hardly be overestimated. We see it in his strong grasp of legal and political questions, the rigorous logic of his deductions, and the strenuousness with which he insists upon the ideas of law and authority. Even in his earliest published work, the treatise *De Collegiis et Sodaliciis Romanorum*,—his dissertation on taking the doctor's degree,—he vigorously expresses his feeling as a jurist, in criticising some feeble argument of Wunder: "Fateor ignorare me quid philologi ad vim pertinere arbitrentur; iuris periti certe in hac vi deiectioneque non agnoscunt nisi lusum verborum." In still higher terms, perhaps with some degree of exaggeration, a similar sentiment is expressed, in his essay upon *Das römische Gastrecht*, in his *Forschungen*: "He who cannot do this, for the reason that he is not familiar enough with the comprehension and treatment of matters in Roman Law, will do well to leave these inquiries unread; but, for the matter of that, he will also do well not to meddle at all with the older epochs of Rome."

* One piece of evidence, among many, is the fact that the Greek *Odysseus* became *Uture* among the Etruscans, while the Romans used the Sicilian *Ulixes*.

This combination of juridical and philological training, to which union each element has contributed whatever it had to offer, is the source of Mommsen's distinctive character as an historian. Other writers have traced with as much enthusiasm, as accurate scholarship, and perhaps as much native insight as he the political development of Rome; but no one of them has possessed so solid a basis to build upon, in the thorough comprehension of that jurisprudence which determined this whole development; that is to say, no other historian has been able to treat the Roman constitution from so profound an understanding of the principles upon which this constitution rested. Others have studied its phenomena of growth, he alone has gone to the roots.

He is, therefore, above all things, a political historian, a student of political science, and a thinker upon political questions. In this field, he is fond of looking for analogies in other times and nations; from England, especially, he has borrowed a multitude of apt illustrations, recognizing in her, no doubt, the best modern parallel to the character and career of Rome. Thus:—

“The expulsion of the Tarquins was not, as the pitiful and deeply falsified accounts of it represent, the work of a people carried away by sympathy and enthusiasm for liberty, but the work of two great political parties, already engaged in conflict, and clearly aware that their conflict would steadily continue, — the old burgesses and *meteci*, — who, like the English Whigs and Tories, in 1688, were, for the moment, united by the common danger which threatened to convert the Commonwealth into the arbitrary government of a despot, and differed again as soon as the danger was over.” — Vol. I. p. 336.

He abounds in general principles and pithy sayings on political philosophy. A rich collection of political maxims and principles might be made from his writings, such as the following:—

“Many nations have gained victories, and made conquests, as the Romans did; but none has equalled the Roman, in thus making the ground he had won his own by the sweat of his brow, and in securing, by the ploughshare, what had been gained by the lance. That which is gained by war may be wrested from the grasp by war again, but it is not so with the conquests made by the plough.” — Vol. I. p. 247.

"The belief that it is useless to employ partial and palliative means against radical evils, because they only remedy them in part, is an article of faith never preached unsuccessfully by baseness to simplicity, but it is none the less absurd." — Vol. II. p. 391.

"That faith in an ideal, which is the foundation of all the power and of all the impotence of democracy, had come to be associated in the minds of the Romans with the tribunate of the plebs." — Vol. II. p. 406.

"History has a Nemesis for every sin,—for an impotent craving after freedom, as well as for an injudicious generosity." — Vol. II. p. 299.

"If it is a political mistake to create meaningless names, it is hardly a less to establish the reality of absolute power without a name." — Vol. III. p. 460 (second German edition ; Vol. IV. of the English translation).

"Mankind arrives at new creations with unspeakable difficulty, and therefore cherishes, as a sacred inheritance, the forms that have been once developed. For this reason, Cæsar, with good judgment, leaned (*anknüpfen*) upon Servius Tullius in like manner as Charles the Great leaned upon Cæsar, and as Napoleon tried, at least, to lean on Charles the Great." — Vol. II. p. 464.

"The holy feeling of justice and reverence for law, hard to unsettle in the minds of men, are still harder to create." — Vol. II. p. 477.

In regard to disputed questions of political science, it is, perhaps, enough to say that Mommsen is no *doctrinaire*. He is, first and last, an historian, and an historian of Rome ; he concerns himself little with abstract theories of government, but on each occasion considers solely what was good for Rome at that time. In general, he sympathizes with any government that does its work well, whatever its form or name may be. "A change in the form of the state," he says, "is not, in itself, an evil for a people." It is, perhaps, easier, however, to show what he does not believe in than what he does believe in ; that is, any sham or inefficiency is sure to call upon itself wrathful condemnation from him. He is called an enemy of democracy, and it is true he is an enemy of false democracy, but he is equally an enemy of the common type of monarchy and aristocracy. Thus he says of kings : —

"A fresh illustration had been afforded of the truth that, of all hazards, none is more hazardous than an absolute hereditary monarchy." — Vol. II. p. 266.

"One of those rare men [Cæsar] to whom it is due that the name of king does not serve merely as a glaring example of human pitifulness [*Erbärmlichkeit*]." — Vol. III. p. 525.

Of aristocracy : —

"The narrowness of mind and short-sightedness, which are the proper and inalienable privileges of all genuine patricianism [*Junkerthum*]." — Vol. I. p. 350.

"It [the Senate] sank in this epoch from its original high position, as the aggregate of those in the community who were most experienced in counsel and action, into an order of lords, filling up its ranks by hereditary succession, and exercising collegiate misrule." — Vol. II. p. 386.

Of democracy : —

"Tyranny is everywhere the result of universal suffrage." — Vol. I. p. 359.

"The proper supports of every really revolutionary party [in Rome, that is], the proletariat and the freedmen." — Vol. II. p. 421.

But if oligarchies and ochlocracies receive no favor at his hands, a really efficient senate, or popular assembly, finds no lack of appreciation. If any one form of government in the abstract appears to commend itself to him, it is the self-government of an intelligent people : —

"The senatorial aristocracy had guided the state, not primarily by virtue of hereditary right, but by virtue of the highest of all rights of representation, — the right of the superior, as contrasted with the mere ordinary man." — Vol. II. p. 386.

"Whatever could be demanded of an assembly of burgesses like the Roman, which was not the motive power, but the firm foundation, of the whole machinery, — a sure perception of the common good, a sagacious deference towards the right leader, a steadfast spirit in prosperous and evil days, and, above all, the capacity of sacrificing the individual for the general welfare, and the comfort of the present for the advantage of the future, — all these qualities the Roman community exhibited in so high a degree that, when we look to its conduct as a whole, all censure is lost in reverent admiration." — Vol. II. p. 403.

If, therefore, his political philosophy is at fault in anything, it appears to be in a disposition to judge actions rather by results than by motives ; that is, to be sure, rather as an historian than as a moralist. He guards himself so carefully against

the delusive habit of speculating upon what might have been, and again from that petty temper which refuses to forgive the least obliquity in means, even in view of great aims, that he is too ready to justify whatever turned out well, or even, one almost thinks, whatever was successful in the end, as if it could not have been done otherwise. And in his impatience at weakness and incompetence in great crises, he is apt to overlook or underrate what real efficiency was connected with them, and to pronounce harsh judgment upon qualities and men that failed in their generation, but under other circumstances might have done good service. "For history there are no judgments of high treason (*Hochverrathsparagraphen*)," he says. And again: "It is not proper in the historian either to excuse the perfidious crime by which the Mamertines seized their power, or to forget that the God of history does not necessarily punish the sins of the fathers to the fourth generation" (Vol. II. p. 40); which last assertion may surely be doubted. It is at any rate inconsistent with that quoted above, that "history has a Nemesis for every sin." Moreover, his lawyer's reverence for authority too often leads him to side with power and prerogative, against the impotent cravings after freedom. Hence the principle "that the people ought not to govern, but to be governed," by which he means, however, that the proper demand of reform "was not for limitation of the power of the state, but for limitation of the power of the magistrates."

A man who is an original student and an authority in so many branches of learning — classical literature, antiquities, linguistics, epigraphy, numismatics, and legal science — lives in such an atmosphere of antiquity, that he can see things which duller and less carefully trained eyes overlook, and give weight to evidence that is no evidence at all to others. Often it may be strictly true of such a one that he knows as an eyewitness, because he looks at things with such a perfect comprehension of them that he can place himself in the position of a contemporary, and feel a certainty which, perhaps, he cannot explain, in relation to the affairs of a distant time. It is like the judgment of a statesman or a shrewd man of business, who forms his opinions by processes which he does not attempt to analyze, and upon scraps of evidence of which he may not even be

conscious, but who nevertheless is right, where a mechanical reasoner would be all wrong. No person, therefore, can criticise Mommsen fairly, except so far as he can look at matters from his point of view. Where his views are formed upon distinct written evidence, they are a legitimate subject of debate ; where they are the result of his vast knowledge, all we can say is, that no man knows more than he upon the subject, and no man has a more intuitive insight into the relations of historical events.

It is impossible to read a page in any part of this work without being impressed by the scholarship and the profound insight of the author ; but probably all critics would agree that the most original and characteristic portions are those which treat of the earliest institutions, and of the downfall of the Republic. These two portions, the beginning and the end of the present work, would appear as widely different from each other in nature and requirements as possible, and certainly they call out in the fullest degree the varied and contrasted powers of the writer. Both are indeed essentially political ; but the one demands the power of inferring truth almost by intuition from a mass of fragmentary, contradictory, and often false statements, in relation to a period buried in the deepest obscurity ; the other presents the historian a more familiar task,—that of tracing cause and effect in events which puzzle rather from their complication and from the obscurity of motives, than from any actual scarcity of materials.

The first prominent characteristic of Professor Mommsen's treatment of the primitive history of Rome is the emphasis with which he brings out the opposition in principle between the original patrician constitution, of a purely patriarchal nature, resting upon a Divine authority which is represented in the auspices, and embodied in the Senate, and the order of things that resulted when foreign elements were incorporated into the state. This distinction has been familiar ever since the time of Niebuhr, but no other writer has analyzed the primitive patriarchal institutions of the monarchy, and depicted the nature of the subsequent revolution so clearly as it is done in these volumes.

The patriciate was a definite body, elaborately organized

into tribes, curies, and houses (*gentes*), institutions of an essentially patriarchal nature, resting upon an assumed community of origin. The "houses" at least carefully preserved the traditions of such common origin, and kept up special religious usages, special customs, and a strong sense of individuality; they had sanctuaries of their own, a common property, and a certain control over their own members. This was an organism whose origin goes back beyond the commencement of historical records, and with all its formalism and exclusiveness, — its *unnaturalness* to our eyes, — it was in no sense artificial, but had grown up spontaneously with the life of the community. The term *plebeian*, on the other hand, was an essentially negative one, applied to that unorganized mass of persons who were outside of the patriciate. Plebeians, it was said, had no *gens*, that is, they lacked the hereditary organism of the patricians. To be sure, illustrious plebeian families, such as those of Lucullus, Metellus, and Catulus, developed for themselves the so-called Licinian, Cæcilian, and Lutatian *gentes*, after the analogy of the patrician houses; still, these were not original institutions. This negative term, *plebeian*, embraced a considerable variety of classes, — the clients, or dependants upon patrician houses, *metaci*, or foreigners not naturalized, members of conquered Latin communities, and emancipated slaves. These were inhabitants of Rome, but not citizens, and were governed and protected by laws which they had no share either in making or defending.

In time the plebeians came even to outnumber the citizens, and individuals among them were eminent for wealth and ability. Then followed that reorganization of the state which is the important event of the second period of the monarchy, known as that of the Tarquins. Tradition ascribes to the elder Tarquin a desire to extend the patriciate constitution over the whole body of inhabitants; when this plan failed, by reason of religious obstacles, — a resistance, of which the augur Attus Navius was the mouthpiece, — another method of bringing the non-patricians within the pale of the state was adopted by the kings of this dynasty. The patriciate was left untouched, but another organization, which should include both patricians and plebeians, was created by its side, or rather two or-

ganizations, the classes and centuries for military purposes, the tribes for revenue and administrative purposes, both of which were afterwards made the basis of popular assemblies. These institutions, ascribed to King Servius Tullius, introduced a new and momentous principle into the Roman polity, that the state was commensurate with its territory and inhabitants, and not confined to the descendants of a few families. And the long struggle of the orders is in truth a contest between the patriarchal and the territorial principles, for the control of the state.

A second point of primary importance in Mommsen's view of the constitutional history of the early period is that the contest of the orders consisted in reality of two contests, carried on side by side, sometimes aiding, but perhaps as often retarding, each other. The unjust management of the public domain, and the oppressive laws of debt, did not affect plebeians as such, but only the poor and friendless plebeians; and, what is more important still, wealthy plebeians themselves, as members of the Senate, appear to have been ranked with the oppressors and monopolists. The same persons, therefore, — the Licinii, the Publilii, and other prominent plebeians who were contending against the patricians for the rights of intermarriage and of holding office, — themselves sat in the Senate by the side of patricians, and shared with them the unjust monopoly of the public domain. Nay, more, the tribunes of the plebs elected to protect the poor debtors against the ruling aristocracy might themselves have an interest, as members of the plebeian aristocracy, in the very abuses which it was their duty to check. No wonder the struggle was long and bitter, and the progress slow, seeing that the leaders of the plebs were striving to gratify their own ambition, while the masses simply wanted justice and security.

It is not desirable to discuss here in detail the points in which Mommsen's views of the early constitution differ from those held by other scholars. These are matters rather of antiquities than of history; and it is enough to have described the two which underlie the whole. For the peculiar character of the political struggles of the Republic was derived from the contrast between the developed organism of the

patriciate and artificial organism of Servius Tullius; it was with sincerity that the conservatives raised the cry of sacrilege against the innovators, who would tamper with institutions which received their sanction from the divine auspices. And while this irreconcilable antagonism of principle explains the bitter and obstinate resistance of the aristocracy, the reformers themselves were divided and half-hearted. The abuses would have come to an end long before they did, if the attacks upon them had been made in good earnest and with a hearty unity of purpose. When the poor of Athens were suffering under quite similar burdens, one great statesman, in a single year, was able to carry through enactments which put a stop to them forever. But Rome had no Solon; or, if Spurius Cassius might have turned out one, the established order of things was too strong for him. There was such a variety of grievances, and such complication of party issues, that it was impossible to unite heartily for any one object at a time. So Rome had to be contented with partial and grudging reforms, and at last with a compromise in the shape of an "Omnibus Bill," which left the seeds of evil ready to germinate anew in the time of the Gracchi.

The chapters which treat of the transition from Republic to Empire are remarkable, not so much for essential originality, as for the completeness and logical consistency with which the views of the author are maintained. There does not exist so forcible a vindication of the Empire as an historical necessity, such overwhelming proof of the hopeless disintegration of the Republic, such an earnest eulogy of Julius Cæsar and his policy. The exhibition given in this volume of the character of state and statesmen at this period is all the argument possible in the case. If we fail to accept in full the result to which the historian would conduct us, it is because his undisguised worship of efficiency, and excessive reverence for authority, do not always carry us along with him. And yet one can hardly fail to recognize with him, that the Republic had already become impossible, that Cæsar was a man peculiarly endowed to be the founder of a new government, and that his assassination was an incalculable disaster.

It would be a mistake, however, to regard Mommsen as

belonging to either of the schools of historical opinion represented respectively by the Emperor Napoleon III. and Mr. Congreve. He is no believer in the French type of Cæsarism, which identifies itself with democracy, — meaning by democracy the right of the people, not to rule themselves, but to choose their rulers, — which uses the people merely as the instrument of democracy. His sympathies are rather with what may be called *Periclean* democracy, — the distinctive popular sagacity which knows the needs of the state, and is at once able, in times of peril, to recognize its natural leader, and willing to surrender unlimited power to him for a season. But, after all, this is a power which exists only in a people in its vigor. The Roman people had it when they put their destinies into the hands of Cincinnatus, Camillus, and Fabius Maximus; but when the Roman mob — no longer a *people* — gave dictatorial power to Gracchus, Marius, or Cæsar, it was another thing. Pericles represented the sound judgment and concentrated action of a free people; Caius Gracchus was simply a demagogue, that is, wielded the concentrated action, the unthinking brute force, of a demoralized mob. It might be, no doubt was, with pure motives and wise aims; but it was none the less an essentially monarchical power, while the other was, in the true sense of the word, republican. Now, to say that Mommsen sympathizes with the one of these and not with the other, is only to say that he most admires Roman institutions when they were healthy and vigorous; when they had become effete he regrets it, but recognizes the fact, and sees in it the necessity of a Gracchus or a Cæsar, seeing that a Pericles was no longer possible. He does not, in itself, like this new form of demagogism; but, on the other hand, he does not abhor it as we do. It follows that he is still further removed from Mr. Congreve's view, that the Empire was the manhood, of which the Republic was the infancy and youth; and surely we shall agree here that the Empire was not development, but decay; that, as has been forcibly said, "the Empire may have been a necessary evil, it may have been the lesser evil in a choice of evils, but it was, essentially, a thing of evil all the same."

As has been remarked above, there is no essential novelty

in Mommsen's views in regard to this period of the Republic. Perhaps the most striking point he makes is in carrying back the commencement of the decay to a much earlier period than is usually done. Even at the time of the Second Punic War, commonly considered the epoch of the highest vigor and purity of the Republic, he shows that the causes were already actively at work which eventually destroyed it. Those writers, therefore, who have borrowed from the ancients their notions of the demoralizing influence of wealth, and ascribe the degeneracy of the Romans to the increase of riches and luxury, consequent upon the conquests of the sixth century of the city, find little support in him. Already, before Macedonia and Carthage fell, Rome had outgrown her urban institutions, her yeomanry had disappeared, and her religion had lost all its vitality and power over the lives of men.

In these three points we find indicated the fundamental defects of antiquity, the causes from which it resulted that ancient civilization possessed only a limited capacity for development, and ancient nations only a limited capacity for growth. Modern history gives no support whatever to the common theory, that nations, like men, have their necessary periods of growth, maturity, and decay. Modern society, as a whole, has displayed a steady progress for more than a thousand years; modern nations have had their alternations of progress and retrogression, but every new wave of progress has reached a higher point than the last; the licentiousness of the time of Charles II. and the political corruption of the time of George II. have been succeeded by the purity and virtue of Victoria's reign. But antiquity presents no parallel to this. Ancient nations did, like the human body, contain within them the seeds of necessary decay and death. When one element of growth had run its course, there was no counteracting element to infuse a new life, and preserve the wavering balance; society became one-sided, and toppled over. Thus a downward career, once begun, was never checked. Even the age of the Antonines was only a seeming exception, a few years of wise *government*, but with no real improvement in the community.

The three defects of antiquity were social, political, and religious; in each of these fields, the development was partial

and unexpansive, resulting in a brilliant, but exhaustive career; and each of these defects led to an incurable and fatal disease. First, the ancients had no conception of a free society. Their civilization was founded upon slavery; their free citizens displayed heroic virtues for a time, but slavery, by its very nature, encroached upon freedom and destroyed it. Slave labor supplanted the free yeomanry, great estates swallowed up the small freeholds, and the middle class steadily disappeared. The institution of slavery, therefore, destroyed the foundation of free institutions. Secondly, the idea of the state was inseparable from that of the city. They had no other conception of a free state than that of the city, governed by the public assembly; consequently, when the state grew in size, its institutions were inadequate. Whatever lay outside the city itself must be governed by authority, or be vested with only a shadow of political power; in either case, the free government was at an end. Thirdly, the religions of Greece and Rome lost their hold upon men's reason, and of course upon their conscience; they were still maintained as forms, but practically gave way to superstitions and philosophies.

Only one of these three evils struck the thoughtful mind of Tiberius Gracchus,—the disappearance of small freeholds throughout many parts of Italy, the substitution for them of great plantations, *latifundia*, cultivated by slave labor, and the consequent growth of an immense proletariat in the city. His instincts were no doubt right in seizing upon this as the most serious evil; it was certainly the most pressing. No doubt, too, his plan of meeting it was the best possible under the circumstances,—to call in the public domain (above a certain amount) in the occupation of the nobles and distribute it in freeholds among the poor citizens, a procedure analogous in principle to that of a “homestead act.” But if this was the best possible remedy, this fact only shows how deeply rooted was the evil; for experience proved, what reflection will show must have been the case, that it was only a partial and temporary remedy. The act of Tiberius Gracchus was passed and carried faithfully into operation. In the course of six or seven years, the number of citizens capable of bearing arms, which had been diminishing for some time before, was increased by 76,000 men,—nearly

one fourth; and yet even so wide-reaching a measure as this does not appear to have had any material influence in postponing the downfall of the Republic. And it will be easily seen that such an increase of yeomanry can have been only temporary, so long as the tendencies which caused the absorption of small freeholds were not checked. The members of the city proletariat who were transplanted upon farms, were surely no more likely to hold their own against the aggressions, fraud, and cajoleries of their wealthy neighbors, than the original yeomanry had been. The prohibition to alienate their freeholds would be easily evaded, and a few years would see the new proprietors back in the slums of Rome. Or even if this were not the case, the growth of the proletariat from natural causes would at any rate not be affected. Mr. Long's comparison of this measure with the proposed schemes of emigration on a large scale as a means of relieving England of pauperism, is perfectly in point. Reduce the population as much as you will, and so long as the habits and character of the people remain what they are, they will at once propagate again up to the verge of the means of subsistence.

Again, the available public domain in Italy was very soon exhausted, long before the mass of paupers was adequately provided for. Caius Gracchus, to be sure, proposed to take lands in the provinces for this purpose, and here was an inexhaustible supply, if the ruling classes had had any desire to carry out his plans. But after his death the schemes of colonization were abandoned, and at any rate, from what has been said above, it will appear that their only result could have been to draw off by hundreds from a mass of poverty and crime that was increasing by thousands. Caius, to be sure, appears to have been aware of the inadequacy of colonization as a restorative for the state. It would relieve somewhat an evil that could not be wholly cured, and meanwhile a new element in the state, to replace the lost yeomanry, might furnish a secure basis for a healthy commonwealth. The Italian allies, who were still comparatively vigorous and virtuous, would, it was hoped, regenerate the community. Here again, as in the case of the agrarian laws and the colonization schemes, unquestionably he saw clearly the thing to be done; but just as in

their case, it is doubtful how much good even this would have effected. The Social War resulted, thirty years later, in bestowing citizenship upon practically the whole of the Italian allies; but it does not appear that the Republic was essentially benefited by this, or its existence materially prolonged. For this series of measures only touched one evil,—the social condition of the citizens; the other causes of decay were not reached. By the distribution of land, the planting of colonies, and the extension of the franchise to the Italians, the body of citizens had been fundamentally improved; but the constitution was still as inadequate as ever for its necessities. What good could it do to have a virtuous and patriotic set of voters up among the mountains, so long as the only way of exercising political influence was by going to Rome? Whoever possessed the suffrage, the power was virtually in the hands of the residents of the city. Even, therefore, if these reforms had gone so far as to put an effective stop to the centralization of landed property and the growth of slavery, instead of merely giving a temporary relief, the constitution could never have done the work that was required of it, for the reason that it lacked power of growth and adaptation. The political ideas of the ancients were of narrow range; within certain limits their thought was vigorous and accurate, but they could not go outside those limits. The Romans could not see that their empire had outgrown their institutions, and if they had seen it we may doubt whether they could have devised a remedy. It was not until the broader and freer life of modern times that means were devised of uniting freedom with extent of dominion. The republican institutions of Rome were clearly inadequate for the complex administration of this vast empire; and, so far as we can see now, nothing but absolute monarchy possessed the unity of purpose and concentrated energy which were required.

I have spoken only of two of the causes of the fall of the Republic,—the destruction of its social structure by slavery, and the inadequacy of its institutions to do the work of government. Either of these was enough to cause its ruin; but if these had not been enough, the utter decay of religion and morality had deprived the community of all that makes a republic possible. And here one cannot help turning to the

rapid degeneracy in our own Republic, — the corruption, violence, inefficiency, growth of mobocratic ideas, decay of public spirit, and, worst of all, loss of that reverence for law which is the only foundation for free governments. There is more resemblance between Rome after the Gracchi and America after Andrew Jackson, than one likes to acknowledge. But, after all, nothing is more misleading than historical parallels, and it is not hard to show that, however great may be our political degeneracy, and however appalling the perils before us, the analogy to Rome is only in superficial and symptomatic circumstances. These might be the sign of the same diseases that destroyed Rome, but they are not. We have dangers and defects of our own, and it may be that they are as deadly and unavoidable as those by which Rome perished ; but with them our present inquiry has no concern. The three defects which led to the overthrow of the Roman Republic do not exist among us ; on the other hand, we can see only encouragement where there was only hopelessness for them.

In the first place, we possess what Rome had lost, — a healthy social organization. In spite of the centralizing tendencies of modern society, the counteracting influences have so far proved strong enough to preserve the balance. The middle class — the strength of republican institutions — is probably increasing rather than diminishing in numbers, virtue, and intelligence. This assertion can be made only doubtfully, to be sure, and it will not be agreed to by all ; but however that may be with the North, there is at any rate the great fact that in the South a middle class has been wholly created within five years. In that section of country it was the custom to boast, and with truth, that its society rested upon the same foundation as that of ancient Rome, and it presented the same phenomena as Rome, — all the resources of the community controlled in the interests of a body of landed capitalists, and the consequent discouragement of a middle class. All this is changed. However the experiment may succeed, it is to be tried ; society has been radically reorganized, and every opportunity afforded for the growth of an independent yeomanry, in full faith that if opportunity is given natural causes will bring about the desired end. Whatever diseases, therefore, our social system

may develop, there are as yet no indications of that most fatal one, the loss of a middle class.

In the second place, this vigorous middle class, scattered over the whole extent of the country, is not, by reason of this dispersion, deprived of its due influence upon public affairs; but is able, by means of representation and of our federal form of government, to act upon both national and local affairs with effect proportioned to their respective nearness and importance. It is true, our political organization is far from perfect, and our mode of representation in particular is crude and clumsy, and no doubt we suffer far more from these defects than is generally supposed. But modern political philosophy is broad and expansive, where that of the ancients was confined to a narrow routine. We are in the habit of questioning our institutions closely, scrutinizing their defects, and proposing remedies. The single fact of the recent revision of the Constitution of Illinois is full of promise for the future; for it is revised, not in the interest of doubtful theories, but with the aim of practical improvement. The ancients, on the other hand, could not understand where their political system was defective. They could conceive of but one type of republicanism; and when this had exhausted its power and resources, they had no refuge left but in despotism.

In the third place, religion is not a dead thing with us, as it was in Rome in the last years of the Republic. However great the corruption, vice, and indifference at the present day, there was never a time when religion was more active or more efficient in combating them. What peculiarly characterizes the religious institutions of our time is that they have learned to leave idle speculation aside,—to leave theology to the theologians,—and to use their strength in contending against vice, crime, ignorance, and want. Religion, at the present time, has entered into the affairs of daily life, with an organized skill and aggressive energy which are quite new to her in this field, and is conducting the fight against the powers of evil with wonderful spirit and success. This is the element which promises to purify, strengthen, and preserve the others. We have, therefore, a sound social organization, and an expansive political system, both of which were wanting to Rome. But

we possess also in the active, liberal type of Christianity which is characteristic of the present age a power of which Rome was even more destitute ; and this is our great hope for withstanding that flood of corruption and anarchy which, in the absence of these other checks, was the immediate cause of the overthrow of the Roman Republic.

In an historian like Mommsen, the matter is so much more than the style, that it would be quite excusable to pass over his rhetorical qualities without comment. Rhetorical qualities as such he may be said scarcely to possess. His object is always to instruct, and he makes no attempt at fine writing, picturesqueness, or brilliant narrative. His style is direct and masculine, quite free from the cumbrous and involved sentences in which German writers seem to delight, although his compact and weighty sentences are far from rapid or easy reading. The English translation, indeed, surprises one who is familiar with the original, by giving the impression of an animation and grace which the original seems to lack ; and yet this seeming defect of the original may be only the inaccurate impression received by one to whom the language is a foreign one. However that may be, if his narrative is somewhat heavy, and too much interrupted by dissertation, he is a master in that high order of eloquence which results from moral earnestness and vigorous thought, and depends upon directness and simplicity of expression, rather than upon mere rhetorical ornament. His remarkable analyses of character ought not to be passed over without notice ; to one who believes in the influence of person upon the course of history, they possess a peculiar value.

Most of what appears as defect in form, in the German edition, is due to the neglect of typographical elegances, in virtue of which the book is brought within the reach of very moderate purses. The compact type, the long unbroken paragraphs, the absence of illustrative matter, and of any but the most general table of contents (dates and marginal index are copiously given), are perhaps slight matters. It is, however, a serious defect that there are so few references to authorities, and that opinions which run counter to prevailing views are merely stated with hardly any argument. The author owes it to his students, and to the interests of that branch of knowl-

edge to which he has devoted his life, to have a more elaborate edition prepared of his great work, in a style worthy of it, expanded into a large number of volumes, furnished with full tables of contents and chronological tables, and provided with references and citations wherever these would be a material assistance to the student.

Meanwhile we are waiting impatiently for the additional volumes, which shall describe the Empire with the same vigor and comprehension with which he has already described the Republic. No person living is so competent to treat of the Roman Empire, for no other person understands so well the roots from which it sprang. And since in the Empire itself is to be sought the origin of much that is most fundamental in the institutions of the modern epoch, Mommsen's new volumes, whenever they come, will be an indispensable foundation for the study of modern history.

W. P. ALLEN.

ART. IX.—CRITICAL NOTICES.

1. — *The Nation : The Foundations of Civil Order and Political Life in the United States.* BY E. MULFORD. New York : Hurd and Houghton. 1870. pp. 418.

THE main purpose of this book is to show that the moral being of the nation is its essential principle. Other subordinate questions are also discussed, many of which are connected with the forms and functions of the National and State governments of the United States. While with the ancients, theoretical politics were usually treated as a branch of ethics, in England and this country political discussion has been almost exclusively confined to the organization of government, the distribution of its functions, its representative basis, and similar topics, which have an immediate practical bearing. The foundation of the nation in morals has not been a subject of systematic investigation. Mr. Mulford has the advantage of being the first in this country to enter upon the field, and this fact alone will always give his work a distinction in American literature. We cannot better give an idea of the scope and method of the book than by a summary of the course of the argument.